



Mission

Street-Level Youth Media's mission is to educate Chicago's underserved youth in media arts and emerging technologies for use in self-expression, communication, and social change. Street-Level's programs build critical and creative thinking skills for youth who have been historically neglected by public policy makers and mass media. Using video and audio production, computer art and the Internet, Street-Level's young people address community issues, access advanced communications technology, and gain inclusion in our information-based society.

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History

Street-Level was founded in the early 90s by a group of community artists who were interested in creating change within their West Town neighborhood through the power of media arts technology. In one of their first projects, they introduced hand held cameras to local youth and created video letters between rival gang members who had never spoken to one another. The success of this and other collaborative media projects with young people inspired the artists to continue their community-based work over the next couple of years. After acquiring a storefront space, donated computers, software programs, and the Internet, Street-Level incorporated in 1995 to become one of the country's first non-profit organizations to offer technology access and community-based media arts training to underserved urban youth.

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Our Programs

School-Based Programs

Since 1995 Street-Level has partnered with more than 50 Chicago Public Schools to provide programming during and after school. Next year, we will partner with more than 15 schools and serve more than 1,000 students through our schools programs. These programs include: **arts integration**, where we work with classroom teachers using media arts to help teach traditional subjects; **after-school workshops**, which most commonly include video and audio production; and **arts electives**, which are full courses offered during the school day, taught by Street-Level instructors.

Community-Based Programs

In addition to school-based programming, Street-Level provides on-site workshops, free of charge, for youth from around the city. Workshops are scheduled quarterly during the school year, with additional opportunities during the summer.

Over the next year, we plan to identify a new space for our community-based workshops, to replace our original space, which was destroyed in a fire last fall. With a more central location, and a larger space, we plan to offer even more digital learning opportunities for Chicago Youth.

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Program Highlights

My Community Matters



One example of our media arts integration programming is the "My Community Matters" project. Partnering with two to three diverse public schools, we work with students to create audio and video projects for a permanent multimedia exhibit at the Chicago Children's Museum. The exhibit explores students' connection to their community and themselves. Over the course of 20 weeks, students learn basic skills in the digital arts, emphasizing skills in graphic design, video production, and audio production.

Musicology

In Musicology workshops, held regularly at our after school sites, students learn to use computer-based music software to compose original songs. Youth learn the fundamentals of songwriting, recording and microphone techniques, and are encouraged to write and record lyrics dealing with their everyday lives.



Female Action Voicing Change



Female Action Voicing Change (FAVC) is Street-Level's longstanding workshop for teen girls. The workshop promotes youth leadership among young women ages 14-19. Youth develop their media arts skills by acting as mentors to small groups of younger students, and work collaboratively to create original media. Much of the group's work focuses on social issues relevant to teenage girls.

Sounding Point

In Sounding Point, students learn the basics of radio-broadcasting. While developing the skills to be an on-air radio personality, youth create original programming including interviews, news stories, music and more. Final Sounding Point projects are distributed by podcast through our web site and other places like Vocalo.



Summer Arts Apprenticeship Program



Our Summer Arts Apprenticeship Program (SAAP) pairs 15 of our most promising high school youth with adult artists during an eight-week summer course. Youth study a common theme like 'identity' or 'work,' participating in discussions, lectures and workshops over the course of the summer. The program culminates in a group exhibition featuring original work from each student.